

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PN, OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: GOP WORRIES OVER ARIAS' RETURN

REF: (A) PANAMA 3862, (B) PANAMA 4070, (C) PANAMA 3773

1. THE RETURN OF FORMER PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS
JUNE 10 HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR PRESIDENT
CARTER'S VISIT SIX DAYS LATER. IN THE FIRST
PLACE, PANAMANIAN WILL INEVITABLY COMPARE THE
SIZE OF THE TURNOUT FOR ARIAS WITH THAT FOR
PRESIDENT CARTER. IF ARIAS' CROWD SHOULD BE CLOSE
TO AS LARGE AS THE "TORRIJOS-CARTER" CROWD,
IT WILL BE CONSIDERED A DEFEAT FOR TORRIJOS.
WILLY-NILLY, WE ARE PLAYERS IN PANAMANIAN POLITICS.
SOMEWHAT MORE TROUBLING IS THE POSSIBILITY OF
PANAMENISTA-INSPIRED DISTURBANCES DURING THE
PRESIDENT'S VISIT. THE PANAMENISTAS HAVE ADVERTISED
THEIR OPPOSITION TO CARTER'S VISIT AS CONSTITUTING
INTERVENTION IN PANAMA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THOUGH WE HAVE NOT HEARD MUCH ON THIS RECENTLY.
MOREOVER, THEY HAVE SOMETHING OF A REPUTATION FOR
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NASTY OPPOSITIONIST TACTICS AND ARE DETERMINED
TO LAUNCH AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT, ANTI-TORRIJOS
CAMPAIGN UPON ARIAS' RETURN. THERE IS SOME
POSSIBILITY THAT THIS CAMPAIGN MIGHT GET INTO SWING
SOON ENOUGH SO THAT, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY,
CARTER'S VISIT WOULD BE AFFECTED.

2. IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO WARD OFF ANY
UNTOWARD PANAMENISTA ACTIVITY, "LA ESTRELLA"
OF JUNE 7 CARRIED A FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL,
UNDOUBTEDLY GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED, REFLECTING
THESE CONCERNS. IT WAS REPRINTED JUNE 8 IN
THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED "CRITICA". IN EFFECT,
IT CALLED ON ARIAS TO KEEP HIS THRONGS IN LINE
AND TO OPPOSE THOSE OF HIS PARTY WHO MIGHT TRY
TO DISTURB THE PEACE. THAT SAME DAY, A PANAMENISTA
PARTY SPOKESMAN RESPONDED TO THE EDITORIAL ON
RADIO, ASSURING THE GOVERNMENT THAT THEY "HAVE
AT NO TIME PLANNED TO PROMOTE ANY DISTURBANCES
BECAUSE THE PRESENT SITUATION IN PANAMA IS NOT
SUITABLE FOR ANY TYPE OF UPRISING."

3. AS REPORTED REF C, PANAMENISTA PARTY LEADERS,
IN A RECENT MEETING WITH EMBOFFS, ASSURED US THAT
THEY WERE NOT PLANNING TO DISRUPT CARTER'S VISIT
IN ANY WAY. WHILE WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THERE
IS LITTLE CAUSE FOR CONCERN AT THIS POINT, WE
MUST ADMIT THAT THE LINGERING DOUBTS ON THE GOP
SIDE ARE SLIGHTLY INFECTIOUS. JORDEN

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